

RUNNING RACES FOR WINE

Playful new ways of bringing wine consciousness to the masses

When I first began to write about Oregon wine 20-some years ago (in millennia of wine, hardly a flash), there were only a couple hands-full of labels to track. Now we have more than 400, increasing almost daily. And the wines are often very good. This poses many challenges, not only for wine writers but particularly for the wineries themselves — their owners, their staff, retailers, et al.

Competition has become quite fierce, requiring innovative, creative responses to stir the market pot. Options abound for wineries: improve labels and/or packaging, improve distribution, sharpen marketing and brand recognition, remodel tasting rooms, bring in food trucks, improve picnicking facilities and so on.

First, make ever-better wines, no easy task, especially in the face of rapid climate changes, increasing sophistication in winemaking, expansion of global markets and a hundred other such variables. Of course, use of the internet and social media in marketing have radically altered the sales game. One obvious strategy: Encourage visits to tasting sites.

Games: There's an idea. Everybody likes games, right? Even supermarkets 'n' fast-food joints use games to engage customers. Who doesn't like the chance to win free stuff 'n' moolah?

So: a wine game, a bingo, in partnership, say, with a travel business — a game that could promote travel to local wineries where punters could taste the wares (maybe buy some?) and get their bingo cards stamped, building toward the Big Prize ...

Travel Lane County and participating wineries (and others) thus concocted Pinot Bingo, a yearlong game that formally launches May 4 to open Oregon Wine Month. Rules are simple and "play" is not exactly onerous. Anyone who wants to play can visit any wine site (21 wineries, plus "pairings"— some breweries, restaurants, retailers) in the South Willamette Valley, pick up a bingo card (including map and "How to Play"), get a number stamped (e.g., G3/Pfeiffer, G8/LaVelle), start filling in rows and columns and such, until



BINGO! Winner!

There are three ways to win: "flight," in which you complete a row, horizontal, vertical, diagonal (you know how bingo is played); "bottle," in which you complete three rows (15 visits), take your prize, keep your card, play on to next level; and "fill cellar," in which you complete the whole card, get entered for the grand prize (drawing May 2017). Brochure sez: "Bring your completed card to the Eugene, Cascades, & Coast Adventure Center in Springfield" (Gateway, neighboring Michaels and Best Buy) to collect prizes (plus advice on further adventuring).

Realistically, there can't be losers in this process. Players can start, say, with the urban wineries, then roll out to the beautiful rural wine country (especially Territorial Highway), sample terrific wines — some, like Pfeiffer, never available in stores, some just released. Fill in cards with stamps at virtually every stop (no purchases necessary). Enjoy the journey, and the play.

Some wineries are trying other strategies. For instance, this month the new owners of Domaine Meriwether (G9), Lorrie and Eric Normann, announced they will change the brand's name to Valhalla Winery, "with a nod towards their Norwegian heritage, Valhalla is the 'grand hall' in heaven where life was celebrated with food and wine." Note, if you Googled "Valhalla," nobody has to die in battle to enter this Valhalla. Wassailing is encouraged, but with their very good wines, as is safe driving home.

Visit, taste, meet friendly people and win prizes. The biggest prize, however, might be the experience itself, the chance to discover your own preferences in styles and flavors, plus the chance to confirm a simple truth — some of the best wines in the world are being made here, in our own neighborhood.

In the words of an old adage, "In vino veritas" — loosely translated, "In wine there's truth." And truth is fine, isn't it? But free stuff doesn't hurt.

We wish all our vintners — and our readers — the very best, at their work or at play. ■

CLASSIFIEDS

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WEB classifieds.eugeneweekly.com **WRITE** 1251 Lincoln St. Eugene, OR 97401
VISIT our office Monday-Friday 9am-5pm

LINE ADS: \$11/3 LINES
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EVENTS

AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN MUSIC HERITAGE SHOWCASE: In Celebration of African-American Gospel Music, A Musical Journey, presented by Inspirational Sounds, a non-profit Gospel Choir with the Lane County NAACP. Sunday May 1st, 3pm, Soreng Theater in the Hult Center. Some featured artists: John Gainer and the Portland/Vancouver GMWA choir, praise dancer, Shekela Fortson, Stone Cold Jazz, African dancers Habib and friends, God In Charge, a Portland children's group, Montrell Goss, Stanley Coleman as Bayard Rustin, early civil rights activist. Emceed by Eric Richardson, pres. of the Lane NAACP. Tix at Hult Center box office. This program paid for in part by a grant from Lane County Arts Council of Eugene, cultural services division.

BULLETIN BOARD

Announcements
MOST POTENT SPIRITUAL MOMENT OF THE YEAR ON OUR PLANET:
 Full Moon: Thurs. April 21, 10:24 pm PDT
share-international.org **AGELESS WISDOM**

Lost & Found
LOST BROWN IPHONE/WALLET Friday April 15, 5 pm. Campbell Ctr parking lot. Pls return my phone & ID's, no questions asked! EPD has been notified, can return to them or the Campbell Ctr or call Phil at (541) 521-0427.

Wanted
SEEKING KIDNEY DONOR Type O is preferable but any blood type is ok. All medical expenses paid. Contact 541-255-5257

Pets
GREENHILL HUMANE SOCIETY Everybody Deserves a Good Home. Fr-Tu 11a-6p. Closed Wed/Th 88530 Greenhill Rd 541-689-1503 green-hill.org See our Pet of the Week!

SHELTER ANIMAL RESOURCE ALLIANCE
 S.A.R.A.'s Treasures Gift & Thrift Shop. Volunteer, Donate, Shop, **ADOPT!**
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 541-607-8892 sarastreasures.org
LOOK FOR THIS WEEK'S RESCUED CAT.

Adoption/Family Services
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WE ARE SEEKING an addition to our sales team. Previous experience working in media sales or a related field is preferred. An upbeat, professional, outgoing, positive attitude is a must. Compensation includes base plus commission with a potential for a bonus as well as a benefit package. Please submit a cover letter and resume to office@eugeneweekly.com or mail to 1251 Lincoln St. Eugene, OR 97401.

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